



Saint Agnes Medical Center

January 2, 1996

David Werdegar, MD, MPH
Director
Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development
1600 Ninth Street, Room 433
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Dr. Werdegar,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the 1995 California Health Outcomes Project report. We support efforts to improve the health outcomes for the populations we serve as well as the entire state. This report is a good first step in providing the public with outcome measures of hospital quality.

We have reviewed the outcome data for our Medical Center in detail and have the following concerns;

First, we hope that subsequent models can be easier to interpret. The current models are very detailed and complicated. It took many hours of data analysis just to determine the various risk factors included in the models and how our Medical Center scored on each of the factors. We do not expect the general public will be able to understand what actually produces the final outcome statistics.

Second, there is a concern that healthcare providers will (and can) simply "clean up" the data to improve the reported outcome without changing any clinical practice. This defeats the entire purpose of improving health status for California residents.

Finally, there is great variation in comorbid condition and complication coding practices across California health care providers. This inconsistency makes evaluation of outcomes across facilities somewhat dubious.

Because the intention of the project is to improve the quality of hospital care, we would like to see improved measures of outcome, such as comparisons of functional status before and after a Discectomy, versus the ICD9 based coding of comorbid conditions and complications. The current data abstract provided by hospitals to OSHPD was not intended to develop comprehensive quality of care ratings. We understand that collecting additional data will add cost, therefore, we would recommend an evaluation of the current reporting program with the hope that OSHPD could eliminate unneeded processes and offer a better (and simpler) measure of hospital quality.

Dr. Davud Werdegar M.D., M.P.H.
January 2, 1996

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to the findings of the project. We commend your efforts and look forward to improvements in the outcome definitions and measures. If you would like additional information, please contact me at (209)-449-3301.

Sincerely,

Sister Ruth Marie Nickerson, C.S.C.

Sister Ruth Marie Nickerson, CSC
President & Chief Executive Officer